



Mahbubur Rahman, chairman of Eastland Insurance Company, attends its annual conference for 2021 at the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry yesterday.



Md Mohsin Habib Chowdhury, senior general manager, sales and marketing at Berger Paints Bangladesh, launches the company's new 'Berger Experience Zone' flagship outlet at Reshom Potti in Rajshahi recently.

Tougher tasks ahead

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Rahman backed the signing of trade deals with neighbouring countries. The commerce ministry should form a dedicated negotiation cell to address the issues, he said.

The graduation benefits are cited to include an improved country image and higher investment rating by international agencies, which may attract larger foreign direct investment, said Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (Sanem).

"LDC graduation, however, is not a panacea. There are several risk factors for Bangladesh," he said.

The loss of exports in markets where Bangladesh enjoys duty-free access as an LDC, can be sizeable.

Many of the prospective benefits will not be "automatic" as the country has quite a lot of works to do to materialise those benefits, Prof Raihan said.

In contrast, almost all possible losses would be "automatic" as soon as the country graduates, he said.

The country has to prepare itself over the next five years to counter these challenges, he said.

The fight against Covid-19 for an economic and social recovery is a daunting task, he said.

"The country's investment environment needs major development. Also, the changing global and regional scenarios appear to be much more challenging," he said.

All these suggest that Bangladesh has to put in some extraordinary efforts in its economic and social development process in the days to come, Raihan said.

Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka office, said this was an international recognition of Bangladesh's development progress based on a more comprehensive assessment of development than just per capita income.

It considers human capital and vulnerability in addition to per capita income, he said.

There may be some impact on access to concessional finance from bilateral donors, but the magnitude of this impact is unlikely to be large, although it could still be significant for some specific causes, such as building resilience to climate change and aid for trade, he said.

"We need to prepare hard both on the demand and supply sides," Hussain said.

On the demand side, alternative ways to maintaining trade preferences granted to Bangladeshi suppliers will have to be opened, he said.

These include inking free trade agreements, finding ways of accessing multilateral economic cooperation arrangements such as the Regional Comprehensive Partnerships (RCEP) and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), and increasing trading opportunities through greater market access under WTO provisions.

This will require a great deal of homework led by the Ministry of Commerce, involving relevant experts, as well as smart economic diplomacy, he said. On the supply side, improving competitiveness will be most critical, he said, adding that this meant increasing the productivity of business enterprises and labour as well as the efficiency of the

trade logistics system.

Much faster progress on structural reforms in all these areas will be needed to be pursued with urgency, Hussain said.

"We now need to work hard and quickly to build up our internal capacity to harness the benefits and positive outcomes of the graduation," said Nihad Kabir, president of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka.

"We need to swiftly build up our negotiation skills and capacity, with a dedicated trade cadre and the involvement of specialists in commerce and foreign affairs," she said.

One immediate step, which can be highly beneficial in coordinating all the actions and research needed throughout government and private sectors, is to have an office of a trade negotiator, akin to the US trade representative, at the Prime Minister's Office, added Nihad.

"This office could bring in academics, practitioners, experts from Bangladesh, and overseas under one umbrella."

The MCCCI president stressed on development of a fully accessible associated database and data analytics skills. KAS Murshid, director-general of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, said the government would have to take up several initiatives to reform the financial sector in the lead up to graduation.

The banking sector and tax collection should be given importance to make the economy more vibrant, he said.

"Political will is paramount to do so," he said.

Asif Ibrahim, chairman of the

Chittagong Stock Exchange, said LDC graduation now posed both opportunities and challenges.

"Erosion of preferential market access for our exports will be our biggest challenge. However, graduation is a seal of approval for international investors and will create opportunities for FDI inflow."

The country must fast-track necessary policy reforms and expedite the infrastructure projects to attract international investors while working on improving export competitiveness on an urgent basis, Ibrahim said.

"The UNCDP's recommendation is the best news of all," said Rubana Huq, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

"This gives a breathing space to the country to be prepared," she said.

Rizwan Rahman, president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), said a lot of opportunities would be opened for business due to graduation.

The country, however, will initially face some challenges, but it will benefit from the graduation in the long run, he said.

"The DCCI has already started work to tackle the challenges," he noted.

Abdul Matlub Ahmad, a former president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, said Bangladesh had worked hard to attain the developing country status to gain enormous benefits in the future.

He said Bangladesh would be able to successfully manage all challenges to graduate the economy to the next level.

Graduates struggling to secure employment

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"So, the universities should collaborate with private sector entities to convert our youth into skilled human capital," Rahman said.

In order to do so, internationally accredited skills development training programmes should be held, while research universities that provide high-quality post-graduation facilities need to be established.

Rahman suggested that incentives such as tax exemption should be provided to the private sector to collaborate with universities for research and development.

He also called for increasing public investment in education, research and skills development.

"We need to change our mindset for better industry-academia collaboration," said Education Minister Dipu Moni.

She urged the private sector to invest in education for a sustainable and commercially viable research ecosystem.

"Universities should not focus only on education and degrees as they have to provide necessary trainings," Moni said.

"There is a gap between industry and academia, and to reduce this gap, we need mapping to identify skill requirements."

Despite the devastating socio-economic impacts of Covid-19, the pandemic has created many opportunities, and a tripartite collaboration among industry-academia and researchers could help reap those benefits.

Kazi Shahidullah, chairman of the University Grants Commission; Md Sabur Khan, chairman of the board of trustees at Daffodil International University; Syed Nasim Manzur, managing director at Apex Footwear; Syed Ferhat Anwar, director of the Institute of Business Administration at the University of Dhaka; Anisuzzaman Talukder, a professor at the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology; and Tahmina Mostafa, a director of Meghna Group, were present.

Rice output to decline, says USDA

FROM PAGE B1
Land preparation, seedling planting, and transplanting of seedlings from seedbeds to rice fields are proceeding, though slightly delayed from previous years, it added.

"Farmers are currently enjoying favourable prices for the latest Aman rice harvest. Therefore, it is likely farmers will increase Boro rice production relative to the past season," said the USDA report, adding that it would be able to provide a more accurate Boro rice area and production figures in its upcoming Grain and Feed Annual, 2021.

The retail price for low-quality grain, namely coarse rice, was 43 per cent higher in January this year compared to the corresponding period a year ago, the report said.

A limited supply because of a relatively low harvest during the Aus and Aman rice

seasons was the key factor for the price rise, said the report. The price increase trend has been observed since March 2020, when the country imposed a countrywide lockdown to manage the Covid-19 pandemic.

The USDA, citing the government's move to purchase rice and issuance of permits for private importers, forecast that the total import in the current marketing year would be 6 lakh tonnes.

The Directorate General of Food has signed agreements to buy 6 lakh tonnes of rice from the international market, mainly from India. It gave permits to traders to import 10.5 lakh tonnes.

The government has already imported one lakh tonnes of rice, and businesses imported 1.75 lakh tonnes, said Md Moniruzzaman, additional director for procurement of the Directorate General of Food, last week.

Coming out of LDC, a welcome move from all sides

FROM PAGE B1
So, simply put, Bangladesh is about to graduate out of the LDC category, but it has always been and is still a developing country in the literature on development economics. For the international bodies, the term "developing country" does not serve any practical purpose.

Bangladesh has always been a misfit among LDCs in terms of its population size. That was one of the reasons why Bangladesh always met one of the three graduation

criteria, namely that of vulnerability, which depends mainly on the size of the country.

Unlike other LDCs that mainly export agricultural or other primary products, Bangladesh's main export is a manufacturing product, namely garments.

That is why Bangladesh did not often find common ground with other LDCs in global negotiations. So, the country's coming out of the LDC group will be seen as a welcome move from all sides.

The author is an economist.

Global container shipping rates are high, but unsustainable: Fitch

FROM PAGE B4
Container shipping companies' performance improved in 2020 due to higher freight rates in the second half of 2020, despite lower volumes year-on-year and to prudent capacity deployment during the strictest lockdowns in the second quarter last year.

"We expect the 2021 sector performance to remain sound, with performances of individual container-shipping companies varying depending on their route mix, their proportion of contracted volumes and exposure to chartered fleet, and any further spending on container inventory. Improved profitability led to stronger leverage metrics in 2020."

"Although container shipping companies performed strongly during the pandemic, we believe that the current shipping rates are unsustainable and expect them to moderate in the medium term once supply chain disruptions ease, as the industry is highly competitive."

Tangail farmers enjoy bumper mustard yield, better prices

FROM PAGE B4
Agriculturist Ahsanul Bashar, deputy director of the Tangail DAE office, told The Daily Star that mustard cultivation in the district was increasing every year as interest was being sparked by repeated bumper production and increasing prices.

"After the devastating and prolonged floods, we have provided the necessary seeds and fertiliser to the farmers as incentives. A total of 34,000 local farmers got government support," he said.

A large number of local farmers cultivated the BARI-14 variety this year, and the seeds were made available to dealers of the Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation, he said.

Local varieties can yield one tonne per hectare, whereas the BARI-14 almost double, he added.

গেথ হাসানির নির্দেশ
জলবায়ু সচিব বাংলাদেশ

Government of The People's Republic Of Bangladesh
Office of The Divisional Forest Officer
Bandarban Forest Division
Bandarban.
E-mail: bandarbanfd@gmail.com

Dated: 25/02/2021.

Invitation for Tender

Memo No.22.01.8400.809.01.001.2021. ৩৬৭

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change	
2	Agency	Forest Directorate, Bangladesh, Dhaka.	
3	Procuring Entity Name	Divisional Forest Officer, Bandarban Forest Division, Bandarban.	
4	Invitation for	Supply of Service provider through outsourcing.	
5	Invitation Ref No.	03/ Operating Costs of 2020-2021 Date: 25/02/2021.	
KEY INFORMATION			
6	Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (OTM): National Competitive Tender (NCT)	
FUNDING INFORMATION			
7	Budget and Source of Funds	GOB. Budget, Government of Bangladesh	
8	Development Partners	Not Applicable	
PARTICULAR INFORMATION			
9	Project/Programme Name	Divisional Forest Officer, Bandarban Forest Division, Bandarban.	
10	Tender Package No.	03/ Operating Costs of 2020-2021	
11	Tender Package Name	Supply of Service provider through outsourcing.	
12	Tender Publication Date	25/02/2021	
13	Tender Last Selling Date	15/03/2021 up to 5.00 PM	
14	Tender Dropping & Closing Date and Time	16/03/2021, 10.00 AM to 1.00 PM	
15	Tender Opening Date and Time	16/03/2021, 3.00 PM	
16	Name & Address of the office (s)	Sadar Range, Bandarban Forest Division, Bandarban.	
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER			
17	Eligibility of Tenderer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenderers will be the firms having required experience of service provider supply through outsourcing. Tenderers shall have the legal capacity to enter into the Contract under the Applicable Law. Tenderers shall be enrolled in the relevant professional or trade organizations registered in Bangladesh. Tenderers shall have fulfilled its obligations to pay taxes & vat under the Provisions of laws and regulations of Bangladesh. Other Eligibility are mentioned in Tender document. 	
18	Brief Description of Services	Supply of of service provider for the position of (i) Boatman (1 Nos) (ii) Mali (5 Nos) (iii) Cleaner (1Nos)	
19	Price of Tender Document	Tk. 1000.00 (One Thousand) Taka only. (Non Refundable)	
	Identification of Lot	Location	Tender Security Amount
	supply of service provider through outsourcing.	Bandarban Forest Division, Bandarban	TK 54,000/-
			Completion Time in Weeks/Months
			30 June, 2022
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS			
20	Name of Official Inviting Tender	Md Farid Meah	
21	Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Divisional Forest Officer	
22	Address of Official Inviting Tender	Divisional Forest Officer, Bandarban Forest Division, Bandarban.	
23	Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	Phone: 0361-62553, E-mail: bandarbanfd@gmail.com	
24	Work Order is subject to be issued upon releasing of fund.		
25	The Procuring Entity reserves the right to reject all the Tenders or annul the tender proceedings.		

(Md Farid Meah)
Divisional Forest Officer
Bandarban Forest Division
Bandarban.

GD- 402